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ABSTRACT

This report is based on the results of student surveys collected during the years 1997 to 2000 from students who took the Introduction to Sociology telecourse at Utah Valley Community College. With a response rate of 45 percent, 231 students completed the survey. The survey was designed to (1) track enrollments; (2) provide a value-added measure in the posttest quiz; (3) assess the students' overall course rating; (4) assess student ease in taking this telecourse in comparison to a traditional course; (5) assess the teacher; (6) assess student self-reported gains; (7) explore student motivation; (8) assess student propensity to refer this course to friends; (9) gain some direction for improvement and further development by assessing what students liked least about it; and (10) explore the sources used by students to learn about the course's availability. Course enrollments were steady, serving a total of 517 students during the four years examined. The majority of students rated the course as either excellent (45%) or good (49%). Forty percent of the students indicated that they found the TV course easier than a lecture course, whereas 25 percent found it more difficult. The students reported many diverse gains from taking the course, including cross-cultural skills, deeper understanding of sociology, personal skills, learning skills, and study skills. Need for improvement was indicated concerning the textbook, graphics duration, and the workbook. (KS)

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Introduction to Sociology, Soc 1010 Telecourse Report for years 1997-2000

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This report is based on the results of 231 student surveys collected in the years 1997-2000 from students who took the Introduction to Sociology telecourse at UVSC. This represents about 45 percent of all the students who have taken the telecourse. The survey was designed to do the following: 1) track enrollments; 2) provide a value added measure in the post test quiz, 3) assess the students overall course rating; 4)assess student ease in taking this telecourse in comparison to a traditional course; 5) assess the teacher; 6) assess student self-reported gain from taking the telecourse; 7) explore student motivation for taking the telecourse; 8) assess student propensity to refer this course to their friends; 9) gain some direction for improvement and further development of the next version of the telecourse by assessing what students liked least about it; and finally 10) explore the sources used by students to learn about the courses availability. Each of these 10 objectives will be discussed in order below.

Enrollments:

Enrollments for this telecourse Are Presented in Table 1 below. Enrollments can be described as predictably steady by semester. Given that Introduction to Sociology is a GE Distribution course, enrollments are expected to continue at a steady and predictable level.

Table 1. Enrollment Figures for Introduction To Sociology Telecourse, 1997-2000

SEMESTER	YEAR	NUMBER OF STUDENTS(based on final grade roll count)
Fall	2000:	53
Summer	2000:	35
Spring	2000:	42
Fall	1999:	48
Summer	1999:	33
Spring	1999:	48
Fall	1998:	48
Summer	1998:	30
Spring	1998:	55
Fall	1997:	62
Summer	1997:	28
Spring	1997:	35
TOTAL		517*

*It should be mentioned that 52 students are enrolled for Spring 2001 at 01-09-01 count.

Instructor Survey Results:

Each semester, students are asked to fill out a survey for extra credit points. Interestingly only 231/517 (about 45%) chose to do the survey. The Survey was completed by 147 Female students (64%) and 84 males (36%). The median age was 24 years with a range of 14-52 years. Students were asked to answer questions about the course and to take a 20 question, multiple choice quiz which covered the core concepts from the course. There was no advanced warning about the quiz and no study guide for the quiz. This was done so that students might answer the quiz questions from their own understanding of sociology. It would probably be harder for students to go back through all their notes and the readings book to find the answers to the quiz,

than it would to simply answer the questions outright. Also, students were not told that it was a quiz. The instruction simply read, "Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability Guess if you don't know for sure."

Value Added:

The results from their scores provide a value added measure of sorts indicating at least some level of retention and understanding at the end of the course. Information about their performance on the quiz is presented below in Table 2. It is obvious that the students who took the time for the extra credit quiz had some level of retention of the core material in the course. The mean score for the class was a 16.53/20 points (83%) B- level performance. And the percent of all the students who scored at least a C- was 88 percent.

Table 2. Results from 20 Question Post Quiz for Introduction to Sociology Telecourse Students, 1997-2000.

SCORE	FREQUENCY/PERCENT
A	**84/36%**
B	**82/36%**
C	**42/18%**
D	**18/ 8%**
F	**4/ 2%**
Missing score	**1/ <1%**
TOTAL	**231/100%**

Overall Course Rating:

Students were asked to answer the question, "How would you rate the course overall?" The responses are presented in Table 3 below. Only 13 (6 %) students chose 3=fair. No students chose 4=poor. The remaining 218 students chose good or excellent (49.4% good & 45% excellent). The mean response was 1.61 between excellent and good.

Table 3. Responses tot he Question, "How Would You Rate the Course Overall?"

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY/PERCENT
1=Excellent	104/ 45%
2=Good	114/ 49%
3=Fair	13/ 6%
4=Poor.	0/ 0%
TOTAL	231/100%

Ease of Learning From A Telecourse:

Students answered a second question about the course as a distance learning course, "It is easier for me to learn from a TV lecture than it is to learn in a regular classroom setting. Do You: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree;3=Don't know;4=Agree;5=Strongly Agree." The results to this question are presented in Table 4 below. There were 57 students (25%) who reported disagreement, meaning that a TV course was not easier than a lecture course for them. Another 92 students (40%) agreed, meaning that a TV course was easier than a lecture course. While 80

students (35%) simply did not know. These results may indicate a few conclusions. First, a telecourse as a modality of teaching works for some students as indicated with the 40 percent who agreed. Second, telecourse learning experience is unique enough that other students could not tell if it was easier for them to learn that way (35 %). Thus, a certain level of comparative uncertainty exists among the students. Third, and somewhat surprisingly, only 1 in 4 students disagreed. One might therefore conclude that these sociology students came to the telecourse with varying learning approaches, yet relatively few reported that they could learn easier in a "regular college classroom."

Table 4. Results From the Question, "It is Easier for Me to Learn from a TV Lecture than it is to Learn in a Regular Classroom Setting"

RESPONSE CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
1=Strongly Disagree	14	6%
2=Disagree	43	19%
3=Don't know	80	35%
4=Agree	75	33%
5=Strongly Agree	17	7%
no answer	2	0.1%
TOTALS	231	100 (rounded)

Mean Score on this question was about 3.17 slightly above "don't know."

The students also responded to the question, "How would you rate the teacher?" Their answers are presented in Table 5 below. The majority of student rate the teacher as either excellent (74%) or good (23%). Only 4 rated the teacher fair and none rated him poor.

Teacher Assessment:

Table 5. Responses to the Question, "How would you rate the teacher?"

RESPONSE CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
1=Excellent	171	74%
2=Good	52	23%
3=Fair	4	2%
4=Poor	0	0%
no answer	4	2%
TOTALS	231	100 (rounded)

Self-Reported Gains:

The students were asked to respond to a few open ended questions about the course and distance learning. The first question was "What was the single aspect/thing you got out of this course?" The answers are categorized by themes and presented in Table 6 below. There were 219 responses made by 231 students to this question. Before discussing the themes from these responses, a consideration of the course objectives should be facilitated. Each student must purchase and use, a 152 page Introduction To Sociology Telecourse Study Guide (Hammond, 1996). The second page of the study guide list the following course objectives:

"Upon successful completion of the course students should be able to:

1. Define sociology, its development, and current role as a scientific discipline.
2. Verbalize the various scientific methods used in sociological research.
3. Become familiar with various subdisciplines in sociology and the nature of its current issues.
4. Understand the sociological imagination.
5. Become familiar with numerous culture and sociological research applications from other countries.
6. Apply sociological perspectives to their environment and daily lives."

When considering the themes found in the student's responses, one may find a correlation between the pre-designed course objectives and the self-reported benefits to the students. By far, the largest theme among the responses is the Cross Cultural Skills theme. Students made 83 comments (38%) about respecting, being more tolerant of, and appreciating diversity among humans. Respect for cultures and being more open minded drew the largest number of responses (22 & 20 respectively). This indicates that the 5th course objective, at least to some degree was realized among some of the students taking this telecourse. In spite of the fact that this is not a race relations course (IE: Soc 3200 currently taught by Hammond or Miraglia at UVSC), one might find it surprising that this theme dominated an Introduction to Sociology course which covers a broad spectrum of topics and materials.

Table 6. Responses to the Open Ended Question, "What Was the Single Aspect/Thing You Got out of this Course?"	**Frequency/ & Percent of Comments:**
CROSS CULTURAL SKILLS: Respect for cultures I wasn't Aware of-22 Be more open minded about others-20 Overcoming prejudice-9 Diversity-8 Different doesn't mean it's bad or wrong-6 Importance of not judging-6 Tolerance for others-5 All are more similar than we are different-4 To look to the world without blinders on-2 Look beyond the surface-1	83/ 38%

Table 6 Continued. Responses to the Open Ended Question, "What Was the Single Aspect/Thing You Got out of this Course?"	Frequency/ & Percent of Comments:
SOCIOLOGY: Deeper understanding of what sociology is-23 Socialization is more important than genetics-8 Sociological change-8 Awareness and appreciation of issues in society-6 Using the sociological imagination-4 Complexity of society-3 The changing power of societies-2 Working together in society-2 How people act in groups-2 Human nature-2 Things from the past can be changed-2 Number of unhappy single women and men-1 Social trends-1 The Thomas Theorm-1	65/ 31%
PERSONAL: Focus more on life around me-10 Family and marriage I could relate to-5 Different thought processes-4 Cla[illegible]d my place in society-3 Another credit towards a degree-3 Need to stay in school-2 Greater self-realization-2 Realizing my limited perspective-2 Sense of accomplishment-1 Self-control-1 Pursue sociology further-1 Don't ever take a video course again-1	35/ 16%
LEARNING: Understanding human attitudes-7 All new information-3 Broad view of many topics-3 Interesting statistics about society-2 New terminology-2 Visual aids-1	18/ 8%
STUDENT STUDY SKILLS: Discipline and persistence-8 Better motivation and study skills-6 Don't procrastinate-3 Importance to read-1	18/ 8%
TOTALS: with rounding of percentages	219/100%

The UVSC Catalog (1999-2000) states in it mission statement:

> "...The college is committed to meeting student and community lower division and upper division needs for occupational training; providing developmental, general, and transfer education; meeting the needs for continuing education for personal enrichment and career enhancement; and providing diverse social, cultural and international opportunities, and student support services."

This telecourse appears to be part of the provision for "diverse social, cultural, and international opportunities." One might argue that it is simply a result of the diffusion of the teacher's personal attitudes to the students. If that is in fact the case then it supports the telecourse delivery mode of higher education as a viable teaching modality in the transmission of teacher values to student-this in spite of the lack of interactivity between teacher and students during the lecture. The second largest theme in the student responses is the Sociology theme. This is a grouping of responses which indicated an appreciation of sociological knowledge. There were 65 (31%) comments made that fit into this theme. "Deeper understanding of sociology; awareness of society, it's issues and it's complexity; and using the sociological imagination" were some of the comments made by students. All of the responses support objectives 1-4 listed above.

The third largest theme of responses was the personal theme. There were 35 responses (16%) in this theme. Comments such as: "focus more on life around me; different thought processes; and greater self-realization" were given. Interestingly, 3 students listed "another credit toward a degree," a very pragmatic response. Another student listed, "don't ever take a video course again" as a response. One natural consequence of any modality of college teaching is that students will find the mode that works best/worst for them. This theme indicates some support for objectives 5 & 6 listed above and for the UVSC mission statement, "for personal enrichment and career enhancement." Students also responded in two other themes, learning and study skills which each had 18 responses and accounted for 8 percent of all the responses.

Motivation For Taking The Telecourse:

The next open ended question was "What was your motivation for taking this course?" There were 222 responses to this question from 231 students. The results are presented in Table 7 below. It becomes apparent that a major motivation is to fill the GE distribution requirement that Sociology can fill if selected. There were 111 (50%) responses including: "fill a credit; required, prerequisite, & majoring. One student listed the intended career as a social science teacher. There were also 59 (27%) personal reasons given. "Sounded interesting, love for sociology, learn about society, and a friend recommended it" were a few examples. In the last theme, practical, the majority of students listed that it was convenient (50) or worked with their schedule(2) comprising 23 percent of the responses. One might argue that almost any of these motivations could be found among traditional lecture classroom selections (except "wanted to try a telecourse"). One can only speculate about these student's course selection if telecourse were not an option for them but the availability of telecourse appears to match closely with the varied needs of students.

Table 7. Responses to the Question "What Was Your Motivation for Taking this Course?"	Frequency/ & Percent of Comments:
ACADEMIC: Fill a credit-49 Required class-42 Majoring in Sociology-12 Prerequisite-7 Future teacher in social sciences-1	111/50%
PERSONAL: Sounded interesting-22 Love for sociology-10 Learn about society-9 A friend recommended it-8 Understand people's behavior-4 Wanted a class from Dr. Hammond-2 Get a better grade-2 Wanted to try a TV course-1 Understand prejudice-1	59/27%
PRACTICAL: Works with my Schedule-2 Convenience–50	52/23%
TOTALS: with rounding of percentages	222/100

The next question was a yes or no question, "Would you recommend this course to a friend?" The results are presented in Table 8 below. The vast majority of students, 222/231 (96%) would recommend this course to a friend. Only 10 (4%) said no. There were 12 students who wrote comments beside their yes/no answer. See Table 9 for those comments. Most of the respondents putting yes and writing in a comment emphasized their approval of the course (see the first five comments). The other four qualified their yes, except the last one which put yes but recommended taking it in a traditional classroom. For the one student who responded with a maybe, the student identified that one would need to be able to work on his or her own and like TV. The Students checking the no box had written in only two comments. The first one makes little sense as it was written, "take course." The second one simply preferred the traditional classroom over a telecourse.

Refer The Telecourse To A Friend:

Table 8. Responses to the Question, "Would You Recommend this Course to a Friend?"

RESPONSES	NUMBER/PERCENTAGE
Yes	222/96%
No	10/ 4%
Maybe*	1/ <1%
TOTALS: with rounding	231/100%

*Maybe was not given as a response option. One student wrote it in.

Table 9. Written comments to the Yes or No Question, "Would You Recommend this Course to a Friend?"
YES: I have recommended it several times i did. She took it. Definitely I already have I feel like we covered more material and stayed on track But only if they are interested Too hard to find your Web page Yes if they had the motivation to keep up with it Only if they get a traditional class with a teacher
NO: Take course Not because it's a bad course, but because after having taken the TV class I feel the classroom offers much more.
MAYBE: Depends if they can work on their own and like TV.

Direction For Improvement:

In an attempt to better understand the dissatisfaction of the 10 students putting no to this question we can specifically consider their response to another question, "What was the single aspect/thing of the course you liked the least?" The results of these responses to this question by those student who would not recommend the course to a friend are presented in Table 10 below. The 10 students made a total of 12 comments. The first three comments deal with resources and assessments for the course. The next five deal with the nature of telecourse delivery. The last one is a maybe type statement.

Table 10. Responses to the Question, "What Was the Single Aspect/Thing of the Course You Liked the Least?" from Students who Would Not Recommend this Course to a Friend.
Readings-4
Syllabus and study guide
Tests
Lack of communication with teacher
Boring and hard to understand interviews
Need shorter videos
Lack of interaction
Dr. Ron is great I recommend him as a teacher, but not the telecourse
Depends but probably.....

The other students, those saying that they would or maybe would recommend the course to a friend also responded to the question, "What was the single aspect/thing of the course you liked the least?" Their responses are presented in Table 11 below. This information provides feedback for improving some of the problems in this telecourse. There were 218 responses provided by students who would recommend this course to a friend. It should be mentioned that many students responded with more than one least favorite thing while many others did not respond at all. In the Pedagogical concerns section, there are two major themes where improvement could easily be made. The first, addressed in 62 comments (28%) was readings. Whereas the lectures were clear and were closely matched to the study guide, the readings were an anthology of classic and contemporary sociology works. Some were translated into English. Throughout the duration of the course, students have commented on the contrast between the lecture based expectations and those of the readings. A new textbook has been selected that will alleviate this problem and a new pedagogical strategy has been developed that will allow students to learn both from the telecourse lectures and their own personal text book study. The second theme was the fact that some of the definitions were not left up on the screen as long as needed. This was also a verbal complaint shared with the instructor quite often. The other pedagogical concerns could be found in a traditional classroom but will be taken into consideration. The last comment is an exception in that this teacher's style is that of a lone lecturer who resembles a talk show host more than a scene of a classroom where the teacher is interacting with the students and the student viewer watches. This was a break from tradition and the decision was based on observations that some students feel like they are an outside observer, as opposed to being in the classroom with the students taped as part of the telecourse. Some complained that their perspective as a viewer was that of a student standing in the hallway peering into a classroom or a student sitting way up in the back of a large classroom, somewhat disconnected from the experience. The strategy employed for this class provides students with a sense of one-to-one teaching from the teacher who typically looks directly into the lense while teaching. Since 231 students responded on the survey and only one complained about this issue, one might safely conclude that the talk show paradigm has merit.

Table 11. Responses to the Question, "What Was the Single Aspect/Thing of the Course You Liked the Least?" from Students who Would Recommend this Course to a Friend.	**Frequency/ & Percent of Comments:**
PEDAGOGICAL CONCERNS: Readings text-62 Definitions not on screen long enough-22 Too much information-15 Tests (at school, long, confusing)-10 Too rushed-3 Paperwork-1 A book of definitions to learn-1 Grading dependent on tests-1 No students on camera talking to teacher-1	116/53%
TELECOURSE DELIVERY CONCERNS: Couldn't interact or communicate with teacher-17 Too much TV viewing-15 Easy to get behind-12 Couldn't interact with other students-5 Videos were too long-2 Had to check out videos-2 I like the classroom better-1 Took a while to learn how to learn this way-1	55/25%
RESOURCES: Workbook problems-9 Late night airing on cable-4 Poor quality video/audio/camera work-4	17/8%
POSITIVE ISSUES: None (students wrote this out)-9 I enjoyed all of the class-3 I found every lecture to be informative. I learned about myself and others around me-1 Convenient-1 Overall it was a great course-1 Dr. Hammond accepts people and loves the subject-1	16/7%

Table 11 Continued. Responses to the Question, "What Was the Single Aspect/Thing of the Course You Liked the Least?" from Students who Would Recommend this Course to a Friend.	**Frequency/ & Percent of Comments:**
SPECIFIC CONCERNS: History of sociology section-2 How Ron presented information-1 Kind of confusing-1 I procrastinated-1 Forgot to tape class-1 Religion-1 Examples used in course-1 Too much focus on rich-1 My lack of motivation-1 The war video footage-1 Gender findings were inaccurate-outdated information-1 Feminist pendulum swings so far as to almost discriminate against men-1 How unequal women are treated in the workforce-1	14/6%
TOTAL: with rounding of percentages	218/100%

Telecourse concerns were not surprising. Not interacting with the teacher or other students is a common complaint. The surprising concern was the "too much TV viewing" comment. One might anticipate that students taking a telecourse would expect and accommodate TV viewing as part of the experience. Yet a few mentioned this as a least liked part of the experience. This deserves more research attention. There were also 17 complaints about some of the resources made available to the student. The workbook study guide will be rewritten. The other concerns of scheduling and video quality can be considered. Sixteen comments were of a positive nature in spite of the wording of the question. Another 14 represented idiosyncratic concerns about some aspect of the telecourse.

Sources For Learning About The Telecourse:

The final question asked on the survey which will be considered in this report was, "How did you find out about the telecourse?" This question pertains to the marketing concerns about this course. Since enrollments are critical to the facilitation of a telecourse or any other course for that matter, the result from this question will be considered. The responses are Presented in Table 12 below.

It is clear from these responses that the official efforts to advertise this telecourse are doing more to recruit students than any other listed method. There were 96 students (45%) who indicated that the UVSC schedule and catalogue informed them of the course. It is not clear if those two sources are the same publication. Most student would look at UVSC's semester schedule of available classes (especially the distance learning section) and not the general catalogue of programs, courses, etc... for course availability.

Table 12. Responses to the Question, "How Did You Find Out About the Telecourse?"	Frequency/ & Percent of Comments:
OFFICIAL SOURCES: UVSC Catalogue or Schedule-96 TV advertised-20 Student advisor-11 At School-11 From Dr. Hammond-10 Distance learning-10 On-line-3 Registrar-2 Mailing flyer-1	164/77%
UNOFFICIAL SOURCES: Friend suggested it-49	49/23%
TOTAL : with rounding of percentages	213/100%

The second largest source is from a friend 49 responses (23%). Perhaps the administration and staff could emphasize in various forms of communication that students should ask their friends about telecourses they are considering. They should also emphasize the spreading of word by mouth by students who took a telecourse. Obviously this is already occurring to some degree. It also runs the risk of negative referrals. The third most common source is TV advertising Probably on the Utah Education Network. New and more advertisement strategies should be considered. The other sources listed here should also be considered for recruiting purposes.

Conclusions:

In sum, this report has considered 231 student surveys collected in the years 1997-2000 from students who took the Introduction to Sociology telecourse at UVSC. The survey was designed to do the following: 1) track enrollments; 2) provide a value added measure in the post test quiz; 3) assess the students overall course rating; 4) assess student ease in taking this telecourse in comparison to a traditional course; 5) assess the teacher; 6) assess student self-reported gain from taking the telecourse; 7) explore student motivation for taking the telecourse; 8) assess student propensity to refer this course to their friends; 9) gain some direction for improvement and further development of the next version of the telecourse by assessing what students liked least about it; and finally 10) explore the sources used by students to learn about the courses availability.

Enrollments are predictable and steady for this telecourse. In spite of the fact that it competes with Internet, live interactive, and other telecourses. It will continue to see steady and predictable enrollments. Most students performed well on the post-quiz as a measure of value added for this telecourse. It would be ideal to have heard from the 55 percent of students who have also taken the telecourse yet opted not to take the extra credit survey. In spite of the somewhat lower than desired response rate, much can be learned from these findings. The course received a high overall rating from students. The findings of student ease in taking this telecourse compared to a regular classroom are mixed and indicate the self-understanding that students gain in college classes of all modalities. Many students felt that it was harder, a few more felt that it was easier, and many others simply did not know. The teacher received high marks from the students. The students reported many diverse gains from the course which indicate support for the course objectives and for the UVSC mission statement. Student motivation for taking the telecourse was also varied but indicated academic personal, and practical motivations, the consideration of which can provide valuable insight for telecourse administration and faculty. The majority of students would refer this course to a friend. By comparing the findings of that question with a question on the least liked aspect of the telecourse, improvement strategies are facilitated for the second version of the telecourse-especially the textbook, graphics duration, and workbook. Finally, official efforts to inform students about the telecourse were by far more commonly cited as a student's source of information. One must also consider the word of mouth between friends source that was reported. This study is about one course at one college. Yet, it provides information useful to all persons involved in the distance learning process, especially telecourse modalities.

Questions or comments can be directed to:

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